



NEW ENGLAND BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

2/13/2025

Re: New Hampshire Bill 202

From Heather Kusmierz to New Hampshire House of Representatives

Dear members of the House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee, my comments are on behalf of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA), for which I chair the New Hampshire State Leadership Team and sit on the New England Chapter Board. I am submitting comments in opposition of House Bill 202. BHA seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting. We support the North American Wildlife Conservation Model, which is based on the premise that wildlife is a public trust resource that should be scientifically managed and enjoyed by all Americans. Protecting and enhancing access and opportunity to public lands and waters and sound management of wildlife and wildlife habitats are top priorities to our members, and we actively strive to be a voice for wildlife and to ensure America's public lands legacy. House Bill 202 is an effort to dismantle a proven, effective, and representative group that helps to steward our fish, wildlife, and marine resources here in the State of New Hampshire. This bill would aggregate rule making authority under one political appointee, with the political checks and balances afforded by the current structure of the Fish and Game Commission reduced to an advisory role. This opens up the regulatory process for greater political influence in the future. The current Fish and Game Commission is intentionally balanced, ensuring that no more than six of the eleven Commissioners belong to the same political party. Additionally, there is representation from each county and the coastal region in the state. A few notable accomplishments since the creation of the Commission are: - The State has acquired and now manages 124 Wildlife Management Areas adding 60,000 acres of wildlife habitat that also provide outdoor recreation opportunities for various user groups - The Non-game and Endangered Wildlife Program recently celebrated its 35th anniversary and secured two federal grants to apply to conservation of Blanding and wood turtles as well as bolstering habitat for state endangered and state threatened butterfly species - For game species, at the turn of the 20th century, whitetail deer and wild turkey populations were at critically low levels that required the Commission to pair new regulations with habitat stewardship efforts lasting decades to reverse those trends. The most recently available (2023) NH Wildlife Harvest Summary shows a stable turkey population and a thriving whitetail population that's 24% over objective New Hampshire's natural resources and all the opportunities they provide are too valuable to be left to the political winds. I know personally and for other hunters and anglers, that my involvement in hunting and fishing benefits my mental and physical well-being, connects me to the natural world, and fosters community engagement. Also, hunting, fishing, boating, shooting and trapping are the foundation of New Hampshire's recreational economy. In fact, according to the latest report from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, these activities combined are the biggest segment of New Hampshire's outdoor economy. Tremendous value to people. Tremendous value to the State's economy. Basically, just requiring only clean water, healthy habitats, and stewardship from a proven model. The only place for politics in wildlife management is to uphold one of the fundamental principles our political system is founded on - that of checks and balances - and maintain the current structure and authority of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission. I ask that you oppose House Bill 202. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.